

## Playing hockey with science

In the rarefied study of climate change, there is something called the "hockey stick" graph. The work of three scientists based on research into historic temperatures, the graph shows that temperatures soared in the 20th century compared with the preceding 500 years and that the 1990s were the warmest decade in the last 1,000 years.

The study has now become fodder in the debate over whether there should be mandatory curbs on greenhouse emissions - and the subject of a rare public spat between two senior Republican committee chairmen.

Last month, Rep. Joe Barton of Texas, chairman of the House Energy committee and a fierce opponent of mandatory caps on greenhouse gas emissions, launched an investigation into the study and demanded that the three scientists - from Arizona, Massachusetts and Penn State universities - produce their data, computer codes, archives and details of their funding.

But Rep. Sherwood Boehlert of New York, who favors greenhouse gas limits, told Barton to butt out, that the study fell within his committee's jurisdiction, not Barton's, and further that the investigation "seems to be to intimidate scientists rather than learn from them, and to substitute congressional political review for scientific review." Boehlert called the whole business "pernicious."

Scientific groups have expressed similar concerns about intimidation of individual scientists. We share the concern. We're hardly likely to get sound science if researchers fear that they will be dragged before a congressional committee for reaching conclusions that contradict the party in power's political platform.